

**MONTREAL INSTITUTE
FOR GENOCIDE STUDIES**

Occasional Papers

**Hunger as a Low Technology Weapon:
with Special Reference to Genocide**

by

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HUNGER AS A LOW TECHNOLOGY WEAPON:
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO GENOCIDE.*

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Introduction

Throughout most of history the great majority of people were considered successful if they were able to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter for their dependents and themselves. But hunger, starvation, and famine have, in all ages and in all parts of the world, been the source of the greatest suffering. Food supplies, although essential to maintaining human life, have often been uncertain. Too much or too little water, too much or too little sun, as well as the whole gamut of natural disasters from earthquakes to volcanic eruptions have all had immediate effects on the availability of adequate food resources. Such natural events will not be dealt with in this paper, but the interested reader is well served by an extensive literature on these topics. Golkin (1987) provides a useful guide to that literature as well as a 'Chronology of Famines' and a classified bibliography.

There exists considerable ambiguity as to the exact meaning of the word 'famine'. According to de Waal (1989, Ch.1) its original meaning in English was 'hunger' or 'dearth'. Its current meaning of mass death produced by starvation originated with Malthus who used it not as a description of empirical fact, but as a logical last step in his theory of checks

*Helpful comments by my co-workers Christy Buchanan and Frank Chalk are gratefully acknowledged.

on population growth. (de Waal, 17) Mass deaths as a result of crop failures seem not to have occurred in modern times whenever accurate statistics have been available to check on such reports. Even when people are dying, it tends not to be as a result of starvation, but rather as a result of the variety of diseases that accompany undernourishment and starvation. It will be the argument of this paper that famines, in the sense of mass deaths, are unlikely to occur as a result of massive crop failures, but that they commonly do occur as the result of man-made starvation regimens leading to famines in the Malthusian sense of the term.

There is a much more limited literature on such man-made famines. These are of two kinds: The first kind of man-made famine occurs as the result of the unintended consequences of economic, political, and social processes that aggravate rather than ameliorate an existing shortage of food caused by natural events. (de Castro 1977; Sen, 1981)

The second kind of man-made famine is the result of the age-old and intentional use of hunger as a means of conflict and warfare and it is the main topic of this paper. The fact that human beings need food and water in order to survive has been a crucial element in the conduct of conflict since the earliest times. From the 'to bed without supper' punishment inflicted by some parents on their misbehaving offspring, to the starvation imposed on beleaguered towns, the deprivation of nourishment has always been perceived as a method of enforcing superior demands. Although the existence of planned famines is often acknowledged in passing, the literature on intended famines is very limited. Mudge (1969-70) has examined the legality in international law of the starvation of a civilian population as an instrument of war. This question was raised for him in connection with starvation in Biafra and the results of his inquiry are inconclusive because they depend on whether the intent is to force a surrender or to kill the opponents.

The World Food Conference held in Rome in 1974 attempted to rectify this situation by passing resolutions to outlaw starvation as a means of warfare, but available data give no evidence that these resolutions have been respected during recent conflicts.. (Golkin, 1987:143)

The Question of Intent

During most of history, when the threat of starvation was used in order to force fortified places into surrender, there was no question of the aggressor's intent. It was to win the war at any cost. Neither was there any doubt that the famine eventually resulting from a refusal to surrender was a man-made one. If the city refused to surrender and forced a long siege, then it often happened that the final capitulation resulted in a genocidal massacre.

When food shortages occurred in peace time, as they did with great frequency during most of history, they did not always escalate into famines. Crop failures were frequent enough so that many cultures had developed methods for overcoming such periods of shortage. However, the effectiveness of such methods was circumscribed by the available technology for storing, transporting, and distributing surplus food stocks. To the extent that famines did occur, the question arises whether they were brought about by some human agency, or solely by the vicissitudes of nature? If the former, were they the unintended consequence of other social processes, or were they intended as part of a larger plan of government? Such questions can be answered only by a careful examination of the circumstances surrounding each case.

Within the compass of this paper there can be no question of examining all famines. Since starvation has frequently been used as a method in performing genocides or genocidal massacres, the focus of this paper will be

on the origins and history of that usage, as well as on the social situations that seem to have predisposed to its usage. In the cases selected to illustrate the argument, the question of intent is often very difficult to resolve. However, an attempt will be made to differentiate between man-made famines that were the unintended consequence of other policies, and those famines that were deliberately used as low-technology weapons in conflictual situations. Unfortunately, such differentiation will be difficult when these two conditions overlap: there are cases where the starvation was not intended, but, once observed, was allowed to continue because it was perceived as the just punishment for the victims' perceived failure to make a success of the policy of ruling group.

An Abbreviated History

The earliest domesticated animals were found in the Near East about 8,000 B.C. and plants seem to have been domesticated about 1,000 years earlier than animals (Berger and Protsch, 1973). It was only after such domestication had been introduced that people were able to regularly produce more food than they consumed. Such surplus food production was the basis for a division of labour that allowed specialists to concentrate on practicing their specialty without taking time off to produce food. This was the basis for a complex set of developments involving the collection of food stuffs from producers and their distribution to consumers in exchange for specialized goods and services. These processes were accompanied by developments in techniques of storage and methods of administration. Inevitably, this also implied a certain amount of centralization, and so the first cities were born shortly after the domestication of food production.

Almost by definition, these cities became depositories of wealth that

attracted raids by neighbouring war-like peoples. Since such settlements were obviously not mobile, they were at a military disadvantage and almost from the beginning they developed fortifications. We know that Jericho, one of the oldest cities, was already a fortified settlement about 10,000 years ago (Watkins, 1990). For thousands of years after their first establishment, cities had to be fortified to protect them from attack. It seems that from the beginning the technology of fortification was better than the technology of siege machines. Hackett (1990:16) cites archeological evidence for the early building of massive fortifications, including storage provisions for food and water during a siege. Since the attackers usually were not able to take the city by storm, they relied on a siege that ended only when the defenders ran out of food and water. Thus, starvation became a weapon of warfare and it has remained so right up to the present day.

The early cities in the ancient Near East soon developed into states of two quite different types: the national state and the territorial state.

A territorial state is one where the people identify themselves as dwellers of a given territory. A national state, on the other hand, is one where the people are aware of their identity as a group on the basis of other factors than simple contiguity within the same territory. What are these factors? First of all, the conception of *kin relationship* among the members of the group: the people conceive of themselves as descendants from a common ancestor, and they trace their history back to him. This ancestor may have come from a territory other than the one where the people live at any given time of their history: thus their *history* is only accidentally the history of a country; primarily, it is the history of a people. The reverse is obviously true in the case of a territorial state. It should be noted that the two terms are not exclusive, for, obviously, a national state *is* territorial, in that its sovereignty is limited by definite territorial boundaries. The choice of the terms is, therefore, a matter of emphasis, rather than one of opposition. (Buccellati, 1967:13-14)

A further distinguishing feature of the developing states in the ancient Near East was that in the national state the organization of the army

was the same as that of the people, while in the territorial state the army was a professional militia. The participation of the people in war contributed to their consciousness of national solidarity. In the notion of the sacred war, "War becomes the intimate concern of God The two most characteristic features (of such sacred wars) are the maintenance of legal purity including sexual abstinence and, in certain cases, the law of total annihilation of the enemy and his property. These practices are typical of the national state." On the other hand, such practices have not been observed for the territorial state, so that we may consider this another distinctive feature of the national state. (Buccellati, pp.106-17) This distinction is being introduced here because it helps to explain, in part, why some wars in antiquity resulted in genocide while others did not. (Needless to add that this distinction should not be generalized to apply to modern nation states.)

The Assyrians invented a complex collection of devices for besieging fortified cities and carried a siege train with them on campaign as a matter of course. (McNeill, 1982:14) Still, "faced with a formidable array of defenses, the besiegers often resorted to throwing up earth walls around the city and bombarding the besieged with propaganda, threats and demands for surrender. Anyone who emerged was turned back to his fate." (Wiseman, 1990:48) Such Assyrian sieges could last from a few weeks to three years. Under the Assyrian king, Sargon: "Everything was destroyed and the fertile region, with its crops, plantations and forests, fired to prevent support for human or cattle and preclude renewed rebellion." (Wiseman, p.51) But sieges were lengthy and arduous undertakings that the Assyrian kings preferred to avoid. If, however, they could gain admittance by no other means of their siegework, and if time was of no consideration, they would resign themselves to a lengthy siege. "When at length the town yielded to

the enemy, it was often razed to the ground, and salt was strewn upon its ruins, while the unfortunate inhabitants were either massacred or transplanted *en masse* elsewhere." (Maspero, 1906-08: Vol.VI, 200-202) Thus, holding out under a long siege, unless successful for the townspeople, often enraged the besieging king so much that the entire population was killed. This meant that the inhabitants died either as a result of starvation or at the hands of the victors; in both cases we probably have here the first recorded cases of genocide.

The Greeks used similar methods. In addition, they are also recorded as being the first practitioners of chemical warfare in their efforts of dealing with fortified cities. McCarthy (1970:3) tells us, albeit without citing sources, that Solon of Athens, 600 years B.C., poisoned the enemy's drinking water, while Sparta burned sulfur and pitch to create sulfur dioxide over besieged cities. During the Peloponnesian War, city walls were very simple and just sufficiently guarded; still, they seem to have been invincible. The Peloponnesians did not achieve their goal by means of their primitive siege methods and had to contend themselves with surrounding the city walls and thus starving the inhabitants. (Delbrueck, 1975:153) Devine (1990: 120) tells us of the long siege of Tyre that "the storming of the city ended in bitter street-fighting, in which the Macedonians gave little quarter. Tyre was burnt and the 2,000 surviving Tyrians were crucified to satisfy Alexander's rage." Peter Garnsey makes a distinction between food shortages, which were quite common in the Hellenistic period, and famines. The three best attested famines were siege-induced and therefore of relatively short duration. In contrast, both sieges and shortages were relatively frequent in the early period of Roman history.(1988:37)

The Romans not only developed siege technology to a high level but were also quite ruthless in ravaging the enemy (*vastatio*). "Crops were

carried off or burnt, animals driven off or slaughtered, human beings were massacred or enslaved, buildings burnt." (Dobson, 1990:208) At the same time, they had strong opinions about proper and improper methods in warfare: in Julius Caesar's day, Roman jurists castigated the use of poison in war. (McCarthy, 1970:3)

Similar tactics, based on the human need for food and water, were common around the world. In China, from the second millenium B.C until the fall of the Han dynasty in 220 A.D. the destruction of the enemy's grain supplies was a standard military tactic. (Yates, 1990) However, even in peace time crop failures due to natural causes were so frequent that "between 108 B.C. and 1911 A.D. 1828 famines occurred, or one nearly every year in some one of the provinces. (Mallory, 1926:1) This was so spite of the fact that public granaries were maintained for much of that time in most of the provinces; while this did not prevent famines when crops failed over wide areas, it greatly mitigated the suffering of the people and in minor disasters these supplies were sufficient to meet the needs. (Mallory, pp. 67-68) This plan, which was followed with conspicuous success by Joseph in Egypt, has been reported in many areas as a traditional method of insurance against the worst ravages of naturally caused crop failures.

The Middle Ages, particularly in Europe and the Middle East, witnessed the introduction of further refinements into the production of man-made famines so that they occurred not only among the besieged, but also among the besiegers. This was not at all uncommon and came about because the besieged destroyed the countryside before retreating into their fortifications. The purpose was to prevent the besiegers from being able to live off the land while the besieged were starving. When the Crusaders besieged Jerusalem in 1099, the Franks suffered more than the people inside the city. They starved until messengers could bring bread from their

ships and they were forced to carry water in animal skins from a spring six miles away. (*Gesta Francorum*, as cited in Peters, 1985:284-285) Their suffering may help to explain the extraordinary fury with which the Crusaders massacred the population of Jerusalem once they entered the city. (William of Tyre, as cited in Peters, 1985:287-288)

During such sieges both sides engaged in quite extraordinary brutalities. From the Western European scene we know that when the defenders' food supplies started to run low, they often would evict everybody who was not an active defender: the young and the old, the women and the sick and the wounded. Sometimes these people were allowed to pass through the enemy lines; at other times they were stuck between the lines without food, water, or shelter and suffered a terrible death in full sight of everybody. (Warner, 1968: 133-134, 186.)

The extent to which the starvation of the besieged population escalated into famine depended entirely on the combatants' calculation of their chances of success and the price they were willing to pay for such successes. These calculations were complicated because the deprivation of fresh food and water and the crowding inside the fortifications produced not only starvation, but also cannibalism and epidemics.

The use of deliberate starvation in the conquest of fortified places did not disappear until the modern technology of bombarding from the ground and from the air made the defense of towns impossible. However, the use of deliberate famine as a method in the conduct of conflicts has not disappeared because its basic appeal has remained unchanged: it acts on the basic survival needs of the enemy, it is a low technology method that is easy to administer, and it is cost effective. As Cornelius Walford wrote over a hundred years ago:

That war has been in the past, and probably ever will (while it

shall exist) be productive of famines, seems to be a self-evident proposition. Not only does it draw from their employments those who would engage in the cultivation of the soil; but it withholds the labour necessary to gather in the crops already produced; while by devastating the plains, as also in its endeavours to starve out the enemy, it wastes and destroys at every step that which has been already garnered in. At sea it blockades and diverts cargoes from their destinations; on land it cuts off armies, cities, districts, from their supplies. Still further, war breeds pestilence; pestilence cuts down the population who have escaped from its ravages; the land lies uncultivated; the live stock dies; and desolation proclaims itself. Hence the sword, pestilence, and famine are now, as they have been in all times, the three associated deadly enemies of the human race. (1970:107-108)

What seems to be new in the twentieth century is that most wars as well as most genocides are now directed at 'enemies' inside the perpetrator society. In an age of nation states that are extremely jealous of their rights to sovereignty, the persecution of groups inside the perpetrator society is relatively easy and free of risks. In an age of a highly developed, but also very costly, technology of aggression, famine is a low cost and low technology method that is available even to the poorest and most underdeveloped state. It requires neither sophisticated expertise nor elaborate bureaucracy in order to achieve its intended goal.

Twentieth Century Famines

Stalin in the Ukraine performed the first carefully planned, large scale famine in the twentieth century. He wanted to collectivise agriculture not only to eliminate the kulaks, but also in order to increase production. At the same time, he wanted to accelerate industrialization. The increased agricultural production was intended for export in order to pay for the import of the technology that was essential to his program of industrialization. He increased agricultural quotas beyond the capacity of the land to

deliver. At the same time, he reversed an earlier policy that tolerated national cultures and languages. The Ukraine was particularly targeted by him because it was the bread basket of the USSR and also the seat of a strong, nationally selfconscious, identity. Its borders were sealed off so that nobody could leave or enter, quotas were set impossibly high, troops were sent in to confiscate food stocks that the peasants were accused of hiding. The facts of the resulting famine were hidden from the outside world, and denied when information leaked out. Offers of food shipments by humanitarian organization were refused. (Conquest, 1986.) The result was that an estimated 5-7 million people died in the Ukraine.

This was so clearly a famine that was meant to terrorize the Ukraine and to kill millions of its citizens that the actual level of the harvest was quite irrelevant.

Hitler's Europe is perhaps the most dramatic case of hunger and starvation being used as a deliberate policy. The geopolitical fact that Germany did not provide sufficient food for itself, and the ideological imperative of racism, were combined into a policy of using Europe's agriculture to maintain an adequate diet for the 'master race'. In the 1930s, before World War II, this was accomplished by a concerted drive to barter food imports for promised German industrial products. After the outbreak of the war, the food stocks of occupied countries were simply confiscated. (Shub, 1943, Ch. 12) Hitler's nutritional policy divided the population of Europe into the well-fed, the underfed, the hungry, and the starving. The Germans were the only well-fed people.

The collaborating peoples, who were engaged in tasks of vital or military importance for German security, received a diet that permitted them to maintain a certain degree of labor efficiency. Enemy countries were held to a regime of intense privation, so as to remove all will to resist, while certain racial groups, such as the Jews, were simply starved to death. (De Castro, 1977:418)

Or, as Reich Labor Leader Robert Ley put it so succinctly, "a lower race needs less room, less clothing, less food than the German people." (quoted in Shub, 1943:38)

The genocide was, of course, carried out by several methods. But while the gas chambers of Auschwitz have received a great deal of attention in the literature, the famine deaths in the ghettos, the slave labor factories, and the concentration camps are much less well-known. In addition, starvation took precedence whenever several policies conflicted. Thus, even when Jews were used as slave labor in war industries, it was more important that they die than that they produce war materials. (Jonassohn, 1989)

After the end of the war, starvation continued in a Europe devastated by bombs and undermined by administrative disorganization and corruption. Recovery was very slow because even the American agricultural surplus could not feed all of Western Europe, and also because 1946 and 1947 brought droughts and frosts that damaged crops on an enormous scale. In 1947 the United States introduced the Marshall Plan as a "form of generalized economic aid to the European countries devastated by the war. The U.S.S.R. was invited to be one of the recipients, but the Soviet delegation at the Paris Conference declared that the plan was a device of American imperialism and left the conference." (de Castro, p.439)

The starvation imposed by Hitler was a clear case of the planned and deliberate use of famine as a weapon against specific groups. The post-war situation in Europe, on the other hand, was a clear example of famine being the unintended result of human actions, although it was aggravated by crop failures.

China has the dubious distinction of having produced the most devastating famine of the twentieth century. The massive famine that occurred between 1959 and 1962 is variously estimated to have caused 16 mil-

lion to 27 million deaths above those that would have been expected during those years under conditions of normal mortality. (MacFarquhar and Fairbank, 1987:598)

The causes of this particular famine seem to have been located in a political system based on rigid adherence to an ideology, extreme centralization, and totalitarian intolerance of debate, criticism, and empirical facts. The government tried to consolidate agriculture into giant communes; it engaged in large-scale dam construction which often did more harm than good; it tolerated a disorganized information system based on wrong reporting due to the intolerance of correct reporting that diverged from the Great Leap Forward. Thus, it "insisted that the peasants leave the land fallow in 1959 to avoid losses from not having enough storage facilities to handle the anticipated surplus." (MacFarquhar and Fairbank, pp.318-318) Needless to add that the anticipated surplus never materialized, but the land that was left fallow contributed to the famine.

This famine fell much more severely on rural than urban areas because agricultural procurement quotas continued to drain the countryside of available supplies; these quotas were even increased to support the intense mobilization of resources for accelerated industrialization. The famine was also aggravated because self-sufficiency, which was an integral part of the ideology of the commune movement, inhibited the traditional interprovincial flow that used to make up for local shortages. This was particularly hard on regions that specialized in nonfood crops, such as cotton. Distribution by the government broke down because nobody wanted to report local failures and also because transportation was disrupted by the Great Leap Forward. (Lardy, 1987:376-378)

Based on the still limited evidence available, it seems clear that orig-

inally there was no intent on the part of the government to decimate a specific group of victims. The government did want to implement its design for the Great Leap Forward, and it did enforce its new agricultural and industrial policies. The most likely hypothesis is that the famine started out as the unintended consequence of a series of particularly inept political decisions, and that it was allowed to run its course because the government saw it as the punishment for an uncooperative peasantry.

Only a few years later, beginning in 1966, China was again ravaged by a major upheaval: the Cultural Revolution. The issue here was not hunger so much as the enforcement of orthodoxy to Mao's ideas of a permanent revolution. The resulting disorganization and dislocation produced enormous hardships, including starvation. While Chinese sources claim that 100 million intellectuals were victimized, estimates of the number of fatalities vary between one million and twenty million. (White, 1989:7) No information is available on the proportion of the victims who died of disease, starvation, or at the hands of the Red Guards.

Here again, there was at the outset no intent to produce a famine; but the anarchy of the Cultural Revolution was encouraged by Mao's regime, although it was not tightly coordinated. (White, p.331) Since, for quite a long time, no attempt appears to have been made to stop the rising toll of the Cultural Revolution, we must assume that Mao thought that the victims deserved their fate. Thus, we must conclude that both of these cases started out as the unintended consequences of policies designed to produce radical change in Chinese society, but ended up as the welcome punishment of those groups that were perceived as being less than fully cooperative.

Ethiopia is a large and fertile country that could produce enough food to export appreciable quantities. Since 1974 it has been ruled by a communist regime that wanted to nationalize the property of the peasants

and control their activities from the center. It also had to deal with several liberation armies who controlled various amounts of territory. By 1984-85, these policies, plus a drought, had produced a massive famine. (Clay and Holcomb, 1986, Ch.X.; Henze, 1986) The details became well known around the world due to their intensive media coverage and appeals for humanitarian aid. What is hardly known at all is that the very same drought affected agriculture in Kenya in an even more serious fashion. But there was no famine and nobody starved, and therefore there was no news reporting. What happened was remarkably simple: The government of Kenya set up an interministerial 'drought response committee'. They consulted with foreign advisers and donors, and began ordering food imports through normal commercial channels. Although the drought and the threat of famine were a serious problem also for Kenya, there was no crisis. The imported food and the donor contributions were distributed through normal sales outlets at normal prices. "Since Kenya did not permit any of its people to reach the point of starvation, and since peasants did not flee from their normal living areas, the vast needs for emergency medical services and supplies of blankets, clothing, and elementary household goods that were (and still are) required in Ethiopia, never arose. And since the framework of rural life was not disrupted, when the rains came again in 1985, farmers could go back to work on their land with no needs other than seeds to sow." (Cohen and Lewis, 1986) This is a perfect illustration of how a natural event, drought and the resulting crop failure, will have very different results depending on the actions of the governments of the affected territories.

Another African country that illustrates the effects of social and political decisions on food production is **Malawi**. It is still one of the poorest country in Africa. It shares the same climactic and ecological conditions with its neighbours, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia. But while the

latter remain dependent on food imports, Malawi has, since independence in 1964, developed its agriculture to the point where it has become an exporter of its food surpluses. It has achieved this by a number of quite commonsensical measures, like paying the producers a better price for their crops; this has motivated them to remain on the farm to produce more and better crops, instead of moving to the cities. (Liebenow, 1987) However, it is also relevant to point out that success or failure in agriculture bears no relationship to the development of human rights or democratic politics.

Sudan, the largest country in Africa, is a neighbor of Ethiopia. While some parts of it have been affected by the drought, the famines have largely been a by-product of the civil war between the Islamic North and the animistic and Christian South. One of the more bizarre aspects of this conflict is that the governments of the Sudan and of Ethiopia are mutually hostile to each other and therefore are willing to assist each other's refugees from famine areas more than they are willing to help their own citizens. There have also been reports that the Sudanese government is exploiting humanitarian aid funds in order to pay for the import of armaments. (Lacville, 1991) What makes the intentions of the government quite unambiguously clear is that it has refused access to several aid organizations who have been trying to get food into the famine areas. In this case, it is not only the government that uses famine against the people of the South, but the liberation movement in the South applies the same policy against the Northern occupation forces.

SUMMARY

The above cases illustrate the long history of man-made famines that range from those that occurred as the unintended result of unrelated policy

decisions to those that were deliberately planned as weapons of conflict. Between these two extremes there occur cases that start out as the former and end up as the latter. This means that intent is not only difficult to ascertain, but also that it may evolve as events unfold.

The appeal of the use of hunger as a weapon goes back to antiquity and has persisted into the modern age. There seem to be a number of reasons for this. The first one is that it acts on one the basic needs of human beings. But equally important is the fact that it is a weapon that is cheap to produce, that does not require high technology or elaborate administrative structures, and that can be applied under the cover of a natural disaster. This latter subterfuge still works in many countries that do not want to disclose their real aims of persecuting a group of their citizens. Besides, this ruse allows them to receive large amounts of 'humanitarian' aid that then can be used for many other purposes than the one for which it is intended.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE

In addition to being the result of conflict, hunger can also be the cause of conflict. One need only think of the bread riots that have so commonly been the result of food shortages in ancient Rome, early China, and medieval Europe. Kates and Millman (1990) made a good case for saying that we have reached a stage in our history that makes the abolition of food shortages possible.

The demise of hunger may be attainable because for the first time in human history it is possible to contemplate the end of food scarcity, famine, and mass starvation. With the exception of its intentional creation or perpetration as a weapon of war or genocide, a combination of effective famine early-warning systems, national and global emergency food reserves, and improved experience with distribution and food-for-work programs has brought the end of famine well within sight (404).

Unfortunately, they make an exception for intentionally created famine, although in the twentieth century the majority of famine victims have been the result of just such intent. Thus, the real question is: what can be done to reduce or eliminate such lethal actions.

In order to address that question, it is important to examine the conditions under which these genocidal famines occur in the twentieth century. We live in an age of nation states that jealously guard their sovereignty. Conflicts between states have been declining since World War II, but conflicts within states have been increasing dramatically. The latter have the advantage that other states are not expected to interfere in what the international community has agreed to define as the internal concerns of a sovereign state. At the same time there has appeared an increasing concern with human rights in many countries as well as within the United Nations. Now we seem to be entering a period in which much of the world is not any more prepared to remain unconcerned bystanders when gross human rights violations are committed by a country within its own borders against a group of its own citizens. Two recent events seem to support this optimistic view.

After the end of the recent "gulf war" the Kurds in Northern Iraq came under attack by government forces which caused the majority to flee to neighboring Iran and Turkey. At first, massive aid was provided for these refugees by many countries. But since the only long-term solution for the Kurds seemed to be a return to their former homes, the United Nations passed a resolution authorizing the presence of foreign troops in Iraq in order to protect the returnees.

Even more recently, conflict broke out in Yugoslavia over the attempt by two provinces to separate from the federal state. Their intention was to achieve this peacefully on the basis of a popular vote. The central govern-

ment did not recognize the legitimacy of this procedure and sent in the army. The rest of Europe was faced with a dilemma. Since many European states have their own separatist movements they did not think it wise to recognize the legitimacy of such movements in Yugoslavia. On the other hand, neither did they accept the right of a communist central government to suppress a popular movement by force of arms. So, they sent delegations to negotiate a peaceful compromise. At the time of writing, they have managed to get both sides to agree to a truce; but it is too early to see what the final outcome will be. In the meantime, they have already imposed certain sanctions by suspending technical loan agreements.

These events seem to signal new attitudes with regard to the internal affairs of nation states that may result in limitations on their sovereign right to persecute their own citizens. Of course, there are also states that are impervious to such attempts to limit their sovereignty. The optimistic hope is that eventually they will not be able to hold out against an increasingly general consensus.

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